

Message Text

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17

ACTION OES-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 DLOS-03 PA-01 PRS-01 USIA-06 CG-00

DOT-00 FMC-01 INT-05 AID-05 CEQ-01 CIAE-00 COA-01

COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 EPA-01 INR-07 IO-10 L-02 NSF-01

NSC-05 NSAE-00 PM-03 RSC-01 OES-03 SS-15 SP-02 FEA-01

/089 W

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R 080915Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7142

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, JA

SUBJ: MARINE ACCIDENT INVOLVING JAPANESE TANKER IN MALACCA
STRAITS

SUMMARY: ACCIDENT RESULTING IN OIL SPILL FROM JAPANESE
TANKER SHOWA MARU WHICH RAN AGROUND IN MALACCA STRAITS
HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN IN JAPAN. GOVERNMENT AND
SHIPPING INDUSTRY OFFICIALS, WHILE TAKING A BASICALLY CAU-
TIOUS ATTITUDE, ARE NEVERTHELESS NOT DISCOUNTING POSSIBI-
LITY THAT INCIDENT COULD RESULT IN MEASURES TO RESTRICT
USE OF STRAITS BY SUPERTANKERS. TRANSPORT MINISTRY OFFICIAL
HAS BEEN SENT TO SINGAPORE TO MAKE FIRST-HAND SURVEY OF
SITUATION. HE PROBABLY ALSO WILL VISIT INDONESIA AND MAL-
AYSIA. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE APPROXIMATELY 80 PERCENT OF CRUDE OIL IMPORTS
REACH JAPAN THROUGH MALACCA STRAITS, JAPANESE GOVERNMENT
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AND INDUSTRY OFFICIALS ARE NATURALLY CONCERNED OVER THE

SHOWA MARU ACCIDENT. OFFICIALS OF TRANSPORT MINISTRY'S SHIPPING BUREAU WERE RESTRAINED IN DISCUSSING MATTER WITH EMBOFF, BUT MINISTRY'S CONCERN WAS CLEARLY INDICATED BY FACT THAT DIRECTOR OF SHIPPING BUREAU'S OVERSEAS DIVISION (CHOJI TOMITA) HAS BEEN SENT TO AREA TO MAKE A FIRST-HAND REVIEW OF THE SITUATION. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, MOT FEARS THAT INCIDENT MIGHT LEAD SINGAPORE, MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA TO CONSIDER RESTRICTING, OR POSSIBLY EVEN DENYING, PASSAGE OF SUPERTANKERS THROUGH MALACCA STRAITS. THIS WOULD BE SERIOUS BLOW TO JAPAN, SINCE ALTERNATE ROUTES WOULD EXTEND TANKER VOYAGES BY ABOUT THREE DAYS, ADDING SUBSTANTIALLY TO COST OF OIL IMPORTS.

2. PRESS REPORTS ALSO SUGGEST THAT FONOFF IS CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS OF SHOWA MARU INCIDENT AT NEXT SESSION OF UN LAW OF SEA CONFERENCE. FONOFF OFFICIAL (HASEGAWA, DIRECTOR, SECOND SOUTHEAST ASIA DIVISION) TOLD EMBOFF THAT FONOFF IS NOT ALTOGETHER DISCOUNTING POSSIBILITY THAT INCIDENT MAY STRENGTHEN HAND OF NATIONS SEEKING EXTENSION OF TERRITORIAL SEAS TO 12 MILES OR THAT SINGAPORE MIGHT BE PUSHED INTO JOINING MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA IN LATTERS' EFFORTS TO EXERCISE CONTROL OVER SHIPPING IN MALACCA STRAITS. HOWEVER, HASEGAWA SAID PRESS ACCOUNTS OF FONOFF CONCERN ON THESE POINTS ARE OVERDRAWN. HE STATED THAT SINGAPORE AT PRESENT IS TREATING SHOWA MARU ACCIDENT AS ONE OF MANY SUCH INCIDENTS IN STRAITS AND THAT WHILE INDONESIAN AND MALAYSIAN ATTITUDES ARE NOT YET CLEAR, FONOFF CERTAINLY HAS NOT PANICKED. ON THE CONTRARY, HE CONSIDERED THAT THE SITUATION IS PROGRESSING "SMOOTHLY" FROM JAPAN'S POINT OF VIEW.

3. EMBASSY WILL DISCUSS MATTER WITH TOMITA WHEN HE RETURNS FROM FACT-FINDING VISIT AND REPORT FURTHER AT THAT TIME. IN MEANTIME EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE INFO ADDRESSEES' COMMENTS ON THEIR HOST GOVERNMENTS' REACTION TO ACCIDENT. HODGSON

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